

**Images of Natural and Technological Disasters in Film and Media**  
(EADP 2700:001)

Instructor: Richard T. Weber  
Semester: Spring 2003  
Course schedule: M 3:00 till 5:50  
Course location: MH 311  
Office Location: Chilton 289k  
Office Hours: M-F 8-5 [call before you stop]  
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**Course Description:**

Examination of the popular culture pertaining to natural and technological disasters that results from portrayals of catastrophic events in film by the media. Discussion of what can be done to alter myths about human behavior in mass emergency situations.

**Required Readings:** Readings available in University Union Copy Center.

**Course Policies:**

ATTENDANCE IS REQUIRED!

Arriving late is discouraged.

Participation is encouraged.

Reading weekly assignments are required.

Showing respect to other students is expected.

Make ups will be limited to special circumstances (and with prior notification only).

There will be no extra credit.

Incompletes will be given according to department policy.

Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will automatically result in a failing grade.

Note: see the end of this syllabus for the university policy on Americans with disabilities, and the department policy on cheating and plagiarism.

**Grading:**

Students will earn points through attendance, participation, papers and tests. Please note the following breakdown:

Attendance/participation	100
Midterm	100
Papers	100
Final Exam	100
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>400</b>

A standard scale will be used for grading (i.e. 90% - 100% = A; 80% - 89% = B; 70% - 79% = C; 60% - 69% = D; 59% and below = F).

*Attendance/Participation*

Roll will be taken at least once each class session and attendance will amount to 25% of the student's grade. Attendance to class is an integral part of the students learning experience in this course. The material covered will directly impact the student's ability to do well and complete the exercises given. The information covered in the brief introductions to the movie will be testable information. Asking questions and making comments about relevant course material is conducive for learning. In recognition of courtesy to the other students participating in the course, it is asked the student remain quiet during the viewing of the film. Unscheduled quizzes can be administered

by the instructor. In other words, unannounced quizzes will be given inversely to class participation.

#### *Mid-term/Final Exams*

Approximately 50% of your grade will be determined by tests. These will consist of true/false, matching, and multiple choice. The instructor will advise the student of the structure of the quiz or test in advance. Students who miss the quiz or test without giving prior notification will be given different questions or will have 10% deducted from their final score. Should unannounced quizzes be administered, the total number of possible points will be adjusted. No make ups will be given to those students who are absent when unscheduled quizzes are given. Make-ups for the mid-term and final will be limited to very special circumstances only.

#### *Papers:*

The student will be required to write three small essays for the course. Each student will write a one to 1.5 page paper about each article/news story. The student is required to choose an article from print, radio, web and/or television news and write a summary of the skew in the article. The paper should specifically pertain to what myths are being portrayed.

### **Course Outline**

#### **Week 1 (Jan 13):**

Introduction to Course  
Discussion of course outlay and student expectation.  
Brief introduction to the field of Emergency Management.  
Titanic

#### **Week 2 (Jan 20):**

Martin Luther King Day  
No Class!

#### **Week 3 (Jan 27):**

The Seige

Fischer, H. (1994). Response to Disaster: Fact vs. Fiction & It's Perpetuation: The Sociology of Disaster. University Press of America. Lanham: MD. pp. 11-22.

#### **Week 4 (Feb 3):**

Dante's Peak:

Fischer, H. (1994). Response to Disaster: Fact vs. Fiction & It's Perpetuation: The Sociology of Disaster. University Press of America. Lanham: MD. pp. 23-72.

#### **Week 5 (Feb 10):**

Deep Impact

Scanlon, J., et. al. (1985). Coping with the Media in Disasters: Some Predictable Problems. Public Administration Review. (Special Issue). pp. 123-133

#### **Week 6 (Feb 17):**

Fearless

Mitchell, J., et al. (2000). Catastrophe in Reel Life versus Real Life: Perpetuating Disaster Myth through Hollywood Films. International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters. 18(3), pp. 383-402

**Week 7 (Feb 24):**

Outbreak

Couch, S. (2000). The Cultural Scene of Disasters: Conceptualizing the Field of Disasters and Popular Culture. International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters. 18(1). Pp. 21-37.

**Week 8 (Mar 3):**

Volcano

Webb, G., et al. (2000). Bringing Culture Back In: Exploring the Cultural Dimensions of Disaster. International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters. 18(1). Pp. 5-19.

**Week 9 (Mar 10):**

Mid-term

**Week 10 (Mar 17):**

**SPRING BREAK! NO CLASS!**

**Week 11 (Mar 24):**

Asteroid

Auf Der Heid, E. (2000). Disaster Response: Principles and Preparation for Coordination. Accessed via world wide web on January 7, 2001 at <http://coe.dmha.org/dr/flash.htm>.

**Week 12 (Mar 31): Papers Due.**

Twister

Quarantelli, E.L.. (1996). Local Mass Media Operations in Disasters in the USA. Disaster Prevention and Management. 5(5). Pp. 5-10.

**Week 13 (Apr 7):**

The Day After

Scanlon, J. et. al. (1985). Coping with the Media in Disasters: Some Predictable Problems. Public Administration Review. Special Issue. pp. 123-133.

**Week 14 (Apr 14):**

The Poseidon Adventure

Davison, W., et al. (1976). Media Sociology. Mass Media: Systems and Effects. Praeger Publishers: New York. Pp. 70-99.

**Week 15 (Apr 21):**

Atomic Train

**Week 16 (Apr 28):**

Arlington Road

**FINAL EXAM (May 5)**

## UNIVERSITY AND DEPARTMENT POLICIES

### **Disability Accommodation**

The Emergency Administration and Planning Program, in cooperation with the Office of Disability Accommodations (ODA), complies with the *Americans with Disabilities Act* in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. Please present your written accommodation request to the instructor within the first two weeks of the semester. Students registered with the ODA may present the Special Accommodation Request from that office in lieu of a written statement.

### **Cheating and Plagiarism**

#### *Definitions*

The UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline defines cheating and plagiarism “as the use of unauthorized books, notes, or otherwise securing help in a test; copying others’ tests, assignments, reports, or term papers; representing the work of another as one’s own; collaborating without authority with another student during an examination or in preparing academic work; or otherwise practicing scholastic dishonesty.”

#### *Penalties*

Normally, the minimum penalty for cheating or plagiarism is a grade of “F” in the course. In the case of graduate department exams, the minimum penalty shall be failure of all fields of the exam. Determination of cheating or plagiarism shall be made by the instructor in the course, or by the department faculty in the case of departmental exams.

Cases of cheating or plagiarism on graduate departmental exams, problem papers, theses, or dissertations shall automatically be referred to the departmental Curriculum and Degree Program[s] Committee. Cases of cheating or plagiarism in ordinary course work may, at the discretion of the instructor, be referred to the Curriculum and Degree Program[s] Committee in the case of either graduate or undergraduate students. This committee, acting as an agent of the Department, shall impose further penalties, or recommend further penalties to the Dean of Students, if they determine that the case warrants it. In all cases, the Dean of Students shall be informed in writing of the case.

#### *Appeals*

Students may appeal any decision under this policy by following the procedures laid down in the UNT Code of Student Conduct and Discipline.